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July 2000

(84)

Chile: Reconstructing the Right

Since the widespread antigovernment agitation that began in Chile last year, the right has been conspicuous by its absence. In the first such groundswell since Pinochet seized power in 1973, the opposition was first spearheaded by organized labor, but the resurgent political parties quickly assumed the leadership they occupy today. Centrist parties, clustered around the Christian Democrats, Chile's largest political party, formed the Democratic Alliance. The Alliance's refusal to work with the radical left led to the creation of a rival opposition coalition, the Communist-controlled Popular Democratic Movement. Parties on the right, however, remained divided and disorganized, uncertain of their relationship to the military government and wary of the popular political mobilization that seemed to recall the turbulent Allende years.

Pinochet has reacted to the opposition with defiance tempered by minor concessions. We believe that he is determined to make as few changes as possible to "his" 1980 Constitution, which envisages gradual democratization: congressional elections in 1989 and a presidential contest in 1990. Whether he can ride out the political storm will in part depend on how effectively the Alliance and the Popular Movement can mobilize the opposition. But it will also hinge on how much support the government can retain on the right. The year 1983 was dominated by the center and the left; 1984 may be the year when the civilian right becomes a key player on the Chilean political stage.

Democrats by Default

Before the 1973 coup, the right was well organized, dynamic, and supported by up to a third of the electorate. Although extremely conservative on socioeconomic matters and devoutly anti-Marxist, the Chilean right was democratic and constitutionalist. Overly antidemocratic, corporatist, or authoritarian ideologies were championed by only small extremist

parties; such views were barely represented within the National Party, Chile's leading rightwing party.

The right, however, was sufficiently radicalized by the struggle against Allende to abandon its support for civilian supremacy and to back the military coup that brought Pinochet to power. We suspect that most leaders of the National Party—as well as the Christian Democrats who rationalized the coup—expected that the military, after an initial crackdown, would return power to the traditional center-right politicians. Pinochet, however, refused even to share power with the civilian right, and both the National Party and the Christian Democrats were placed "in recess" by the government. Indeed, Pinochet rejected attempts to form a *projunta* "Pinochetista" party, preferring a military regime that suppressed all forms of public political activity. Under the circumstances, only the most authoritarian rightist leaders participated in the new government, and most of these were drawn from groups—such as Jaime Guzman's Gremialists—that had been politically insignificant before 1973.

In our view, Pinochet's refusal to sanction an official party or to confect some sort of corporatist system to buttress his rule halted the radicalization of the Chilean right. Excluded from a significant role in the government, and in any case lacking an anti-democratic tradition, most rightist leaders had little alternative but to urge an eventual return to pluralist politics—albeit within the context of an electoral system biased in favor of the right. This was precisely what Pinochet offered in his 1980 Constitution, and, despite some grumbling that a 10-year transition period was too long, the right generally supported the initiative. In view of the current domestic turmoil, however, it is no longer certain that rigid adherence to

Pinochet's timetable for democratization is in the right's best interests. This realization has, in our view, spurred much of the right to reorganize itself and loosen ties with the regime so as not to be caught unprepared should Pinochet falter.

A Divided Right

During 1983 the right emerged from its decadelong political dormancy and began to rebuild party structures. Unlike the Communists and Christian Democrats, however, conservative parties had not even maintained skeletal organizations after 1973. This, combined with personal rivalries and divergent attitudes toward the military regime, has contributed to extensive fractionalization on the right. There are at least a dozen self-proclaimed conservative parties in Chile, but only five have even the least hope of emerging as significant political forces.

The *National Action Movement* is the only rightist party that is not even democratic by default. Although they have toned down their explicitly anti-democratic and authoritarian statements in recent months, Movement leaders still speak fondly of "corporatist, antiparty" models of society and rail against "liberal capitalism" and "consumerism." The party is composed primarily of former hardline (*duros*) government supporters who opposed even minimal liberalization and vainly urged Pinochet to institutionalize his rule via an official party. The *duros* also opposed the regime's free market economics, favoring a more protectionist approach with a larger role for the state.

The *Independent Democratic Union* is the Movement's chief antagonist. It represents the soft-line supporters of Pinochet—advocates of free market economics and a slow, controlled democratic transition. The Union has benefited more than any

The Right in Chile

Party	Chief Leader/Supporters
National Action Movement (MAN)	Pablo Rodriguez Federico Willoughby
Independent Democratic Union (UDI)	Sergio Fernandez Jaime Guzman
National Unity Movement (MUN)	Andres Allamand Sergio Jorpa
National Party Reorganizing Committee (PN-RC)	Patricia Phillips Fernando Ochagavia
Republican Right (DR)	Hugo Zepeda Julio Subercaseaux

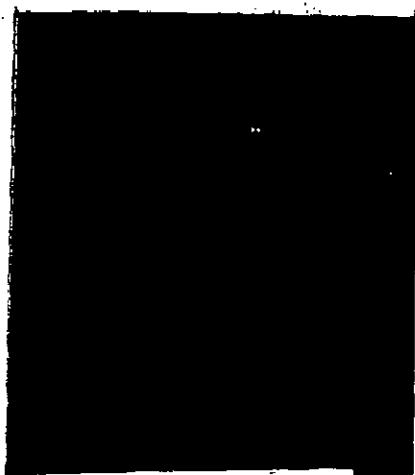
other rightist group from the military regime. Prior to 1973, most of its leaders were either inactive in politics or associated with the small Gremialist student movement. Under Pinochet, these relatively young men achieved positions of considerable power. Although their influence has declined in recent months, they still control many provincial mayoralties and the government-sponsored youth organization. Its government connections and links with the still-flourishing Gremialists may make the Union numerically the largest force on the Chilean right. But close identification with the regime will, in our view, limit the party's appeal in a post-Pinochet era and may compel it to ally with other, less compromised rightist groups.

The *National Unity Movement* was organized in mid-1983 by elements of the old National Party.

Unlike the leadership of the *Independent Democratic Union*, many *National Unity* leaders were politically significant players before 1973 and owe relatively little to Pinochet. The party also favors more nationalist economic policies than the *Independent Democratic Union*. Party leaders have publicly stated that they want to form

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Interior Minister Sergio Jarpa

the nucleus of a broad center-right force that will have a wider appeal than the old National Party. We believe that Jarpa hopes to orchestrate a democratic transition that will adjust the timetables of the 1980 Constitution while accepting its legitimacy, thereby allowing him and the Movement to take credit for the peaceful dismantling of the dictatorship.

The *National Party Reorganizing Committee* competes with the National Unity Movement for the loyalties of pre-1973 National Party militants. The group shares the conservative political and nationalist economic views of Jarpa's movement, but is more independent of the government. Much of the animosity between these two groups stems, in our view, from personal rivalries dating from the pre-1973 era and from discontent on the part of some Committee leaders over Pinochet's choice of Jarpa last fall to initiate a dialogue with the opposition.

Nevertheless, the group publicly continues to accept the 1980 Constitution and has made only very vague proposals to shorten some of its timetables for democratization.

The *Republican Right* is also a refuge for pre-1973 National Party militants, although it has attracted far fewer prominent conservative politicians than either the National Unity Movement or the Reorganizing Committee. It is the only clear-cut rightwing party to have joined the opposition. As a member of the Democratic Alliance, it has repudiated the 1980 Constitution, demanded Pinochet's resignation, and called for the election of a constituent assembly. The Republican Right is important symbolically as evidence that Pinochet's once solid support on the right is eroding, but we doubt that the party has either a coherent organization or much of a grassroots following.

Prospects for Unity

We believe that the right will have to overcome its internal divisions before it can exert significant political influence. The formation of a rightwing coalition comparable to the Democratic Alliance or the Popular Democratic Movement would be a first step. To be effective, however, some of the five major rightist parties will have to merge, and thus reduce their number to a maximum of two or three. Some efforts have already been made in this direction.

More recently, former National Party Senator Francisco Bulnes attempted to bring the National Unity Movement and the Reorganizing Committee together, but the initiative foundered over personal rivalries and the question of independence from the government.

Nevertheless, we expect that the right will eventually put most of its differences aside and form a broad conservative front flanked by a smaller, more radical grouping similar to the quasi-corporatist National Action Movement. With the exception of the National Action Movement, most of the rightwing parties share a common political ideology, and disputes over the degree of government intervention in

the economy can probably be finesse. The threat that the large Christian Democratic Party, purged of much of its former leftist bias, might broaden its appeal to the right will also induce the conservatives to stop squabbling. [redacted]

Furthermore, the debate over the right's relationship to the government is, in our view, primarily rooted in divergent assessments of Pinochet's plans and prospects. These probably will become clearer as the year advances, thereby diminishing this issue's divisiveness for conservatives. Personal rivalries will be perhaps the most difficult obstacle to overcome, but the Chilean right has done so in the past. During the early 1960s, conservatives were split into three declining parties riven by personalist infighting. In 1966, however, they fused to form the National Party, which quickly became Chile's second-largest political force. [redacted]

Outlook

The right has augmented its influence during the past year, and we believe the trend will continue in 1984. Nevertheless, the right does not yet have the strength to shape political developments. This power rests with the government and, to a lesser extent, with the moderate and leftist opposition. [redacted]

The conservatives' precise role this year will hinge largely on which of three possible courses the protest movement takes and on Pinochet's response:

- **Protest Movement Loses Support.** If the current economic recovery continues and Pinochet makes some political concessions, the opposition's mobilizing capacity could diminish. As the pressure on the government subsided, most of the right probably would accept the regime's transition schedule. This, in turn, would strengthen Pinochet's political position and lend credibility to his plan for a gradual return to democracy. The prospect of an orderly transition dominated by the right could induce moderates in the Democratic Alliance to reassess their adamant opposition to the 1980 Constitution. Fear of exclusion from a slowly emerging democratic polity could, in our view, prove stronger than their desire not to legitimize the "Pinochet system."

- **Protests Grow but Remain Peaceful and Moderate.**

- The opposition may quickly recover last year's momentum and go on to coordinate even more massive protests and perhaps a general strike. If the demonstrations and work stoppages remain largely nonviolent and are clearly controlled by the Democratic Alliance (rather than the radical Popular Democratic Movement), we believe that the pressure on Pinochet will increase. In such circumstances, the right, mainly to avoid losing middle-class support to the Christian Democrats, would try to distance itself from an unpopular regime. Several of the rightist parties might even join the opposition. This process would be accelerated if, as the press has speculated, Pinochet were to replace the relatively moderate Jarpa with a more hardline interior minister. These developments would deprive the government of all but ultrarightist civilian backing. They would also shift the center of gravity of the entire protest movement to the right—thereby making opposition activity even more attractive to the middle class and further isolating the regime.

- **Protests Grow Violent and Radical.** The collapse of the economic recovery and continued intransigence by Pinochet could permit the radical left to exert greater influence over the opposition movement. More violent protests, serious political polarization, and social conflict would ensue. The specter of a return to the chaotic days of the Allende regime would, in our view, begin to haunt the middle class and the right. As a result, conservatives probably would rally around the government and sever all cooperation with the opposition. Although most rightists prefer a controlled transition and the reestablishment of civilian rule, they are motivated more by fear of Marxism and social disorder than commitment to democracy. [redacted]